



September 5, 2002

Mr. Kyle E. Smith
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation
P.O. Box 12157
Austin, Texas 78711

OR2002-4974

Dear Mr. Smith:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 168149.

The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (the “department”) received a request for “the winning vendors [sic] bid response and signed contract for the recent imaging bid for air conditioning and refrigeration files.” You state that the signed contract has been released to the requestor. You claim that the remainder of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.110 of the Government Code. You provide documentation showing that you notified Neubus, Inc. (“Neubus”), the third party whose proprietary interests may be implicated, of the request for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the remaining requested information should not be released. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.305 (permitting interested third party to submit to attorney general reasons why requested information should not be released); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (determining that statutory predecessor to Gov’t Code § 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in Public Information Act in certain circumstances). We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the information you have submitted to us for review is the identical information that was the subject of a previous ruling from this office. In Open Records Letter No. 2002-4888 (2002), we concluded that social security numbers may be confidential

under federal law, that a portion of the submitted information was excepted from public disclosure under section 552.137 of the Government Code unless the individual to whom an e-mail address pertains affirmatively consented to its disclosure, and that some of the submitted information was protected under federal copyright law. We also concluded that the remaining submitted information must be released to the requestor. Therefore, as long as the four criteria for a "previous determination" established by this office in Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) have been met, the department must rely on our decision in Open Records Letter No. 2002-4888 (2002).¹ See Gov't Code § 552.301(f); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001).

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report

¹The four criteria for this type of "previous determination" are 1) the records or information at issue are precisely the same records or information that were previously submitted to this office pursuant to section 552.301(e)(1)(D) of the Government Code; 2) the governmental body which received the request for the records or information is the same governmental body that previously requested and received a ruling from the attorney general; 3) the attorney general's prior ruling concluded that the precise records or information are or are not excepted from disclosure under the Act; and 4) the law, facts, and circumstances on which the prior attorney general ruling was based have not changed since the issuance of the ruling. See Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001).

that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/jh

Ref: ID# 168149

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Trace Finley
Image API
8107 Springdale Road, Suite 108
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c: Mr. Eric Kennedy
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